

1 WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

2       1.    An internet customer access system comprising:  
3       a redirect receiving unit for generating a request  
4       for a capacity determination for a web site;  
5       a capacity determination unit for determining if the  
6       web site has capacity to handle an additional customer;  
7       a notification unit for notifying the customer if  
8       the web site currently has insufficient capacity; and  
9       a redirect unit for redirecting the customer to the  
10      web site if sufficient capacity is found.

1       2.    The internet customer access system of claim 1,  
2       wherein the notification unit comprises a scheduling  
3       processor for scheduling access of the customer to the  
4       web site.

1       3.    The internet customer access system of claim 2,  
2       further comprising a customer identification unit for  
3       determining whether a customer has scheduled access to a  
4       web site.

1       4.    The internet customer access system of claim 2,  
2       wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for  
3       attaching a tag to the customer system.

1           5.    The internet customer access system of Claim 4,  
2 wherein the tag comprises an encrypted cookie.

1           6.    The internet customer access system of claim 4,  
2 wherein the customer identification unit comprises means  
3 for detecting the tag on the customer system and means  
4 for removing the tag from the customer system.

1           7.    The internet customer access system of claim 3,  
2 wherein the notification unit comprises an update  
3 processor for informing a customer access system already  
4 possessing a tag of current accessibility status.

1           8.    The internet customer access system of claim 2,  
2 wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for  
3 providing appointment slots.

1           9.    The internet customer access system of claim 3,  
2 wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for  
3 providing the customer with a position in a queue and  
4 means for providing an estimated service time.

1           10.   The internet customer access system of claim 9,  
2 wherein the notification unit comprises means for  
3 providing a customer with an updated place in the queue.

1           11. The internet customer access system of claim 1,  
2 wherein the notification unit comprises means for  
3 notifying a customer that the site is full.

1           12. The internet customer access system of claim 1,  
2 wherein the notification unit comprises means for  
3 notifying a customer that replay options are available.

1           13. An internet customer access system comprising:  
2           a capacity determination unit for determining if the  
3 web site has the capacity to handle an additional  
4 customer;

5           a scheduling processor for scheduling access of the  
6 customer to the web site if the capacity determination  
7 unit indicates that no current capacity exists; and

8           a customer identification unit for determining  
9 whether the customer has scheduled access to the web  
10 site.

1           14. The internet customer access system of claim  
2 13, wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for  
3 attaching a tag to a customer system.

1           15. The internet customer access system of 14,  
2 wherein the tag is an encrypted cookie.

1        16. The internet customer access system of claim  
2 15, wherein the customer identification unit comprises  
3 means for detecting the encrypted cookie on the customer  
4 system and means for removing the encrypted cookie from  
5 the customer system.

1        17. The internet customer access system of claim  
2 14, further comprising a notification unit having an  
3 update processor for informing a customer access system  
4 already possessing a tag of current accessibility status.

1        18. The internet customer access system of claim  
2 14, wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for  
3 providing appointment slots.

1        19. The internet customer access system of claim  
2 14, wherein the scheduling processor comprises means for  
3 providing the customer with a position in a queue and  
4 means for providing an estimated service time.

1        20. The internet customer access system of claim  
2 13, further comprising a notification unit having means  
3 for notifying a customer that the site is full.

1        21. A method for regulating access to a web site,  
2 the method comprising the steps of:

3 receiving a web site access request;  
4 determining whether the web site has sufficient  
5 capacity to accommodate a customer;  
6 redirecting the customer to the web site if  
7 sufficient capacity is found; and  
8 notifying the customer if insufficient capacity is  
9 found.

1 22. The method of claim 21, comprising notifying  
2 the customer that replay options are available.

1 23. The method of claim 21, further comprising  
2 determining whether the customer has a tag.

1 24. The method of claim 23, further comprising  
2 determining whether the tag is valid.

1 25. The method of claim 24, further comprising  
2 redirecting the customer to the web site if the tag is  
3 valid.

1 26. The method of claim 23, further comprising  
2 determining if the tag is expired.

1 27. The method of claim 26, further comprising  
2 performing scheduling operations if the tag is expired

3 and providing the customer with an updated status if the  
4 cookie is not expired.

1 28. The method of claim 21, wherein redirecting the  
2 customer to the web site comprises the steps of  
3 determining if the customer has a tag and removing the  
4 tag if present.

1 29. The method of claim 21, further comprising  
2 scheduling customer access if insufficient capacity is  
3 found.

1 30. The method of claim 29, wherein scheduling  
2 comprises providing the customer with a position in a  
3 queue.

1 31. The method of claim 29, wherein scheduling  
2 comprises providing the customer with an appointment.

1 32. The method of claim 29, wherein scheduling  
2 comprises leaving a tag on the customer system and  
3 providing the customer with a finite time for which the  
4 tag is valid.

1 33. The method of claim 29, further comprising  
2 determining whether a visitor has previously scheduled  
3 access to the web site.

1           34. The method of claim 33, further comprising  
2 providing a customer with updated position information.

1           35. The method of claim 33, further comprising  
2 offering a cancellation and rescheduling option upon  
3 providing updated position information.

1           36. A method for regulating access to a web site,  
2 the method comprising the steps of:

3           determining if the web site has sufficient capacity  
4 to handle a customer;

5           scheduling access of the customer to the web site if  
6 insufficient capacity is found;

7           determining whether a customer has previously  
8 scheduled access to the web site.

1           37. The method of claim 36, wherein scheduling  
2 access comprises scheduling an appointment for the  
3 customer.

1           38. The method of claim 36, wherein scheduling  
2 access comprises assigning the customer a position in a  
3 queue.

1           39. The method of claim 36, wherein scheduling  
2 access comprises providing the customer with a tag.

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1           40. The method of claim 36, further comprising  
2     redirecting the customer to the web site if sufficient  
3     capacity is found.

1           41. The method of claim 36, wherein determining  
2     whether a customer has previously scheduled access to the  
3     web site comprises determining whether a customer has a  
4     tag.

1           42. The method of claim 41, further comprising  
2     redirecting the customer to the web site if the tag is  
3     valid.

1           43. The method of claim 42, further comprising  
2     performing scheduling operations if the tag is expired.

1           44. The method of claim 43, further comprising  
2     performing update processing if the tag is not yet valid  
3     and is not yet expired.